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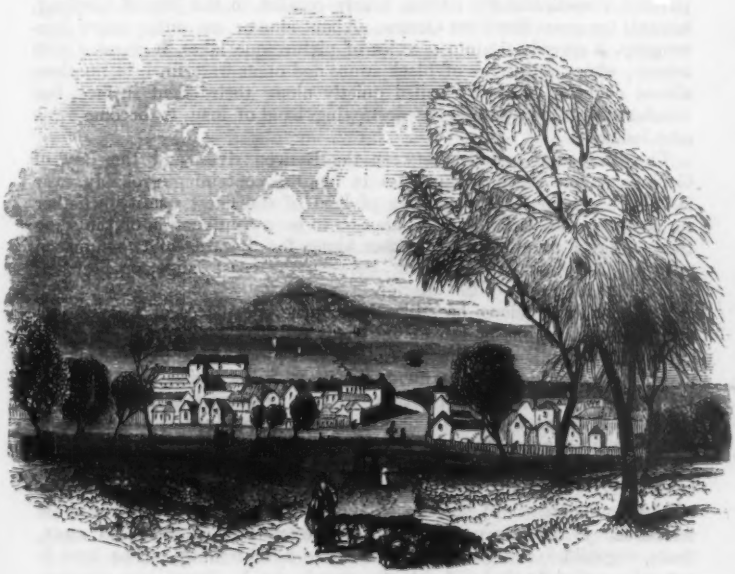
A VISIT TO AUSTRALIA AND ITS GOLD REGIONS.—No. VI.



GEELONG.

SECOND in importance to Melbourne is the town of Geelong, situated on the shores of the bay, or inlet, of that name which branches from the western side of the Port Phillip Bay. It is at a distance of about forty-five miles from Melbourne; and twice or thrice a-day excellent steamers convey goods and passengers from one town to the other in a few hours.

The Bay of Geelong is navigable for large vessels as far up as Point Henry on the southern shore, about six miles from the harbour of Geelong.

From that point, however, a bar or shoal stretches across to the opposite shore. On this bar there is only nine feet of water at high tide, which compels large vessels to anchor on the outside of the bar, and entails the expense and inconvenience of loading or unloading them at that distance from the town. It is the opinion of practical men, however, that there will be no great difficulty or expense in removing this bar: in which case it is highly probable that Geelong would progress with such rapidity as to render it a rival to the city of Melbourne for the honour of being the capital of the colony. The bay is remarkably picturesque, and the situation of the town decidedly one of the best in Australia for a great commercial city.

Corio is the native name for the beach at Geelong, the latter term belonging properly to the inlet or harbour. The Barwon river passes Geelong on its tortuous course to the ocean; and there is a natural terrace on each side of the river, parallel to its banks, which was probably the ancient sea-beach, when the level of the land was considerably lower, and all the low ground under water. After passing Geelong to the left, the river, which in this part of its course is a beautiful stream, pursues a south-easterly course, nearly parallel to the Bay of Geelong, towards the great Southern Ocean. About nine or ten miles below Barrangoop, it spreads out into a series of picturesque lakes, variegated with islands, where multitudes of black swans and other waterfowl, in numbers almost countless, formerly sailed quietly along their silent surface, but which soon bid fair, before the destroying hand of man, to become *rara aves* indeed.

The peninsula included between the Barwon river and the Bay of Geelong, about twenty-five miles in length, containing probably near 200,000 acres, consists principally of land of the finest quality, whether for pasturage or cultivation. It appears to be a continuation of the same tract of level country that stretches along for upwards of two hundred miles to the westward of Geelong, between the coast range, or Marrack Hills, and the ranges of the interior.

The town of Geelong has, like Melbourne, its places of worship, its wide streets, its public buildings, fine shops and warehouses, its newspapers, and all other appliances of modern civilization; but as one pictorial sketch conveys a better idea than a hundred pages of description, we subjoin a view of the town, merely premising that its progress has been so rapid that even a single month is almost sufficient to produce most important variations in its appearance.

Immediately to the westward of Geelong there is much fine land and beautifully picturesque scenery, in what are called the Barrabool Hills, consisting apparently of decomposed trap rock, and presenting the most fertile soil to their very summits. All descriptions of European roots, fruits, vegetables, and grain thrive and flourish luxuriantly. The land is naturally so lightly timbered that the plough can be thrust into the rich chocolate-coloured soil in every direction without any previous preparation as regards felling the trees. Indeed, were it not for the shelter they afford to the parrots and cockatoos, which destroy the grain, their extreme beauty in the landscape would almost induce one to spare even those which occur in the midst of the cultivated fields.

A larger quantity of wool is exported from Geelong than from Melbourne, and a larger quantity from the colony of Victoria than from the older one of New South Wales. In fact, the rich pastoral districts of this

colony not only led to its first establishment, but have ever continued to be its distinguishing feature. It must be a matter of earnest hope that the present pre-eminence of the colony also, as regards the abundance of gold, will not interfere to prevent the continued development of its resources as regards this intrinsically more valuable production. The prospects of the pastoral farmers for the present year are certainly of the most discouraging character. The rich prizes which the auriferous soil confers in such abundance upon its workers, seems to have acted with magnetic force upon every class of the community; and whilst the earnings of a whole year can so frequently be obtained by the labour of a single week, it is not surprising that all classes should endeavour to participate; and although sooner or later such a disproportionate application of labour must tend to cure itself, that reflection by no means tends to render those whose wool may be perishing on the backs of the sheep for want of shearers, or whose crops may be rotting on the ground for want of hands to wield the sickle, better satisfied with the existing condition of things. Unless the great body of gold miners should themselves be seized with a fit of reflection, and determine upon a short patriotic secession from the search after the precious metal, in order that the colonies may not run the risk of losing their hard-earned position as the chief wool-growers in the world, we can see but little hope for those who seem at present doomed within a few months to stand idly gazing, Tantalus like, at millions of "golden fleece," without being able to collect them.

There is a wide difference between an agricultural and a pastoral farmer. The former is most frequently the proprietor of the land he cultivates, while the latter is no more than a "licensed squatter," a tenant at will to the Crown, liable to be dispossessed of his land the moment a purchaser of it may appear. At the present time, and for many years to come, it will be impossible that this should be otherwise. The large quantity of land required for pastoral purposes completely forbids the idea of purchasing it. There are some large sheep-owners who occupy perhaps as much as twelve thousand acres of land, which, at the Government price, would cost as many pounds, and the mere interest on the money would probably absorb nearly the whole amount which the wool itself would produce; and when we recollect that there are some six millions of sheep in the colony of Victoria, requiring for pasturage from twelve to eighteen millions of acres, we shall see at a glance that it would be simply impossible for the land to be purchased, even although the returns were much greater.

It is mainly to the exertions of the "squatters" that we are indebted for the great extent of land which has been explored and occupied. Having fixed upon a tract of land suitable for pastoral purposes, the squatter pays his licence-fee of ten pounds for liberty to occupy his land for a year; he places his stock upon it, and continues for a few years paying an annual visit to the metropolis to dispose of his wool, pay his annual licence-fee, and purchase stores for the ensuing year; amusing himself as best he can in his chosen solitude. But new-comers are ever arriving, and the land round his station is gradually occupied until no more remains available without the labour and privations of a new exploration to still more remote portions of the interior. The capitalist, fresh from home, and scarcely yet reconciled even to a "life in the bush," hesitates to enter upon this task, and looks round for some one who will be willing to part with his established location, for a "consideration." Our old squatter, of course, cannot sell his run, having no title to the land; but he sells the sheep which are upon it, at an

advanced price per head, in consideration of relinquishing his claim and his licence to occupy the land, to the purchaser. He then yokes his bullocks to his dray, having stored it with provisions, and placed in it his gun and some ammunition, mounts his horse, and, with his compass in his pocket, sallies forth, soon leaving the last trace of civilization behind him, and, like a minor Columbus, proceeds on his way to discover a new (pastoral) world. After having had, perhaps, to cut his way through tangled brushwood at the rate of a mile or two per day, and to spend day after day upon the banks of some stream before he can find a fording-place—perhaps having to leave his bullock-dray for a while and scale awkward hills, in order, if possible, to discover the best way of finding a practicable road through them—he at length comes in sight of a piece of open country whose expansive downs promise him the wished-for pasturage, and whose magnificent meadows are watered by some clear winding stream, with its frequent water-holes, to insure an ample supply if the stream itself should chance to fail. Having taken a note of its landmarks, he retraces his steps; and making his way to the Government Commissioner, pays his 10*l.* for leave to occupy his newly-discovered land, purchases his stock, engages his shepherds, and proceeds to people the yet untrodden pastures with myriads of sheep, whose white fleeces dotting the beautiful green valleys, alter at once the character of the scene, and from a solitary wild convert it into one of the loveliest pictures which nature and civilization together can present to the eye.

SHEEP STATION.

The above illustration will serve to convey some idea of the appearance of one of those sheep stations which we have just been describing. The sketch was taken in the beautiful Valley of the Goulburn. The plain so called is about fifteen miles in length, with an average breadth of eight

miles, and bears traces of having, at some remote period, formed the bed of a lake, and the ridges that run out into it from either side have all the character and appearance of headlands. The stones with which it is covered in some spots, or which are found by excavation, consist of quartz pebbles, rolled stones and shingle, as if from the sea-beach or bed of a river. There is a series of plains of this character, more or less of alluvial formation, along a large extent of the mountainous portion of Eastern Australia; the general elevation of these plains being about two thousand feet above the level of the sea. There are the Goulburn and Breadalbane plains to the south, the Bathurst plains to the west, and the Darling downs to the north; the last-named series of plains being a hundred and twenty miles long, and from thirty to forty in breadth.

CATTLE STATION.

It is not only to sheep, however, that the squatters direct their attention, cattle are also an equal object of their solicitude; but as regards the latter, it will not do to change a station so often as in the case of sheep. You may remove sheep from one station to another, as often as you think proper, as they will feed contentedly anywhere; besides which they are never left unattended, and at night are invariably confined by hurdles. But the cattle have a peculiar attachment to the place to which they have been accustomed, and require at least six months to reconcile them to a new one. They have been known to find their way to the place where they had been bred, over a distance of three hundred miles. Great care is therefore necessary in selecting a station which possesses sufficient space, sufficient food, and sufficient water to render it unnecessary to remove for many years. The cattle station, the sketch of which is annexed, is not many miles from the sheep station represented in the previous illustration.

XUM

The pre-eminence of the colony of Victoria, however, is not confined to its capabilities as regards pasturage. It has not only surpassed the main colony in the rapidity of its progress, the beauty of its scenery, the excellence of its land, and the exports of its staple produce, but it has also left it far behind in its yield of the precious metal, gold. The subject of this latter discovery we have reserved to a special chapter, in which it will receive due consideration. But the mineral riches of the colony are not restricted to gold alone, for evidence has been discovered of the existence of other metals, which when the gold is either exhausted, or its collection attended with such difficulty as to render it no longer a subject of more than ordinary interest or excitement, will form a no-less valuable source of wealth and prosperity as regards the ultimate progress of the colony. Copper ore has been found quite equal to that from the Burra Burra; samples of plumbago and of lead ore have also been obtained; and we have also specimens of that scarce metal, platina, which is likely, from its greater rarity, to become even more valuable than gold itself. Last but not least, we may announce that that inestimable mineral, coal, without which our knowledge of all the others would be nearly useless, has been discovered in abundance within a few miles of the city of Melbourne.

We may observe, in conclusion, with regard to this colony, that from all the appearances connected with it, from the rapidity of its progress, the salubrity of its climate, the fertility of its soil, the richness of its pastures, the beauty of its scenery, the excellence of its position, and the variety and abundance of its mineral treasures, it appears destined at no very distant date to become the most important portion of the Australian continent, and the first in value and interest of all the colonial possessions of the British crown.

HISTORY OF GUTTA PERCHA.—No. III.

One of the most interesting properties exhibited by gutta percha is its insulating power for electricity. Dr. Faraday has given an account of this quality, in a letter to the Philosophical Magazine. Its use depends, he observes, upon the high insulating power it possesses, under ordinary conditions, and the manner in which it keeps this power in states of the atmosphere which makes the surface of glass a good conductor.

The electrical properties of gutta percha have been employed in the construction of excellent electrical machines. If a sheet of the very thin gutta percha, of about four or five feet, of superficial area, be laid on a surface, or held against the wall of a room, rubbed with the hand in a silk handkerchief, and then carefully removed by the extreme edges, and held suspended in the air, it will give off a brush-like spark, of several inches in length, to the knob of any conducting surface presented to it. A similar effect may be produced by causing the sheet of gutta percha to be passed once over one, or between two, rubbing surfaces.

An ingenious electrical machine has been constructed of this material, which consists of a frame carrying two wooden rollers, round which, and fitting them very tightly, is made to pass a band of thin sheet gutta percha, about four inches wide. There are two cushions covered with silk, and connected together, so as to press the gutta percha at their upper extremities, and opening towards their lower extremities, at an angle of about 20°. When the handle of the machine is turned, causing the gutta percha band to pass at a moderate velocity, electricity is given off at about three or four

inches below the machines; and if a conductor be applied, the apparatus is qualified to act as a common electrical machine.*

The most valuable application of the insulating properties of gutta percha, is that of covering wire for the Submarine Electric Telegraph. The most recent experiment on a great scale of this kind is the telegraph between Ireland and England; and the following account given of the laying down of the gutta percha wire is so interesting as to deserve extraction into our pages. It appeared in *Saunders' Gazette*, which contained an instructive history of the origin and completion of the undertaking:—

"The Howth and Holyhead Submarine Telegraph is now an established fact, and its promoters are well worthy of the earnest congratulations of all who are capable of appreciating the attributes of decision, energy, and skill. It is to Messrs. Newall and Co., of Gateshead-upon-Tyne, assisted by the Gutta Percha Company of London, that Europe and America are indebted for the Howth and Holyhead Submarine Electric Telegraph. Three several companies had been advertised for telegraphing across the Irish Sea; the usual means for alluring shareholders, electing directors, appointing agents, engineers, &c., had all been put into operation. These necessarily ponderous and unwieldy corporations were slowly and laboriously proceeding to put their much-talked-of schemes into practice, when about three weeks ago the idea flashed across the mind of Mr. R. S. Newall,—'This Irish Telegraph will be a paying concern; it will not require much capital. The firm with which I am connected have facilities for doing the thing; why should not we set about it and do it at once ourselves?' He accordingly explained his view to his partners, got their consent, and immediately applied to Mr. S. Statham, conductor of the Gutta Percha Works, Wharf-road: 'Can you supply us with eighty miles of telegraph wire, doubly covered with gutta percha, within a fortnight?' 'I'll try,' was Mr. Statham's response; and accordingly it was commenced and finished within the time agreed on, being latterly done at the rate of twelve miles a-day. The coated wire was then sent down to Gateshead-on-Tyne to be surrounded with twelve galvanized iron wires, twisted round it in a spiral. The cable being finished, Mr. Newall called on Mr. Statham last Tuesday week, and then for the first time told him the object for which it was manufactured. It was agreed that Mr. Statham should bring a staff of assistants, and the requisite apparatus, to Holyhead the next day to meet the wire. The Admiralty was communicated with, and kindly sent down Captain Beechey, R.N., to give his valuable advice and assistance; and they also lent the 'Prospero,' Government steamer, Lieutenant Aldridge, R.N., to aid in carrying out the undertaking. Meanwhile the 'Britannia' was hired to bring the cable from Whitehaven, and afterwards pay it out from Holyhead to Dublin. The enormous cable, eighty miles in length, weighing a ton per mile, and all in one continuous piece, was wound up into immense coils, placed on trucks, one after the other, and drawn by steam from Newcastle-on-Tyne to Whitehaven—from one side of England to the other. The 'Britannia,' as has been stated, steamed to Whitehaven to take it on board, when, unfortunately, it was found that the entrance to the dock was too narrow to permit the vessel to enter. The coils had then to be replaced on trucks and carried to Maryport, where they were at length embarked, and speedily conveyed to Holyhead. Now, it might be hoped that all difficulties had been overcome, and that there was nothing to do but to lay down the line; but Mr. Statham, who had already achieved the Dover

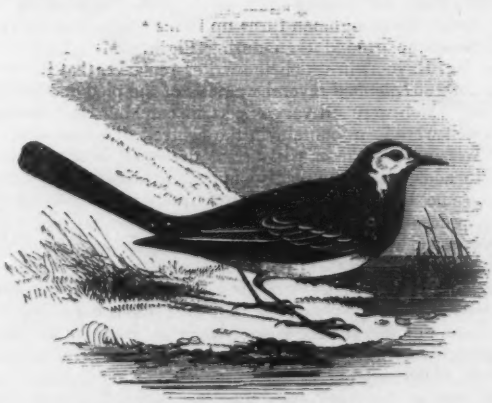
* Mr. W. Barlow in 'Philosophical Magazine.'

and Calais connexion, knew too well the dangers and accidents to which those concerned were liable, in the event of a gale, to trust anything to chance, or to proceed one step further without a careful preliminary inspection. The insulation of the copper was tested and found to be defective; then the portions stowed in the various departments of the ship were examined separately, and at last it was ascertained that the fault lay in some eight miles of line lying in the bottom of the hold. There was nothing for it but to disembark the leviathan bulk, and to track it step by step to the exact seat of the defect. This was accordingly done, the fault remedied, and by Tuesday morning the giant rope was in readiness to be placed in its abiding home. Early on Tuesday morning the 'Britannia,' under the command of Captain Browne, and towed by the 'Prospero,' under Lieutenant Aldridge, R.N., commenced paying out the cable, according as it sank by its own weight to the bottom of the sea, along the route from Holyhead to Howth. There were on board, besides the officers and crew, Mr. R. S. Newall, with a gang from the Gateshead Works; Mr. Samuel Statham, with a party from the Gutta Percha Works; Mr. Thomas Allen, the inventor of a new telegraph instrument; and Mr. Reid, jun. Mr. L. D. Gordon (Mr. Newall's partner) had previously departed to Dublin to supervise the land line from the latter city to Howth. Occasional difficulties were experienced in the paying out of the coils, but they were all overcome through the skill and energy of Messrs. Statham and Newall. Slowly the vessels ploughed on at a rate varying from three to five miles an hour, and at length, between seven and eight o'clock on the same evening, the 'Britannia' anchored off Howth. An electric current was sent through the wire to Holyhead, and the returning answer brought the pleasing intelligence that the line was all right throughout, and perfectly insulated. The portion of cable requisite for completing the connexion with the shore and land line was now laid down, and the parties engaged in this arduous undertaking sought some repose, after nearly two days and nights of excessive and harrowing exertion, about daybreak on Wednesday morning. It might be supposed that everything was now smooth and prosperous. Buoyant with hope, those who had already suffered so much in the attempt went down at noon on Wednesday to the Amiens-street terminus, to test the success of their enterprise. The batteries were put in action, the wires were connected, and they anxiously awaited a reply; but none arrived! They telegraphed to Howth, and were answered—the fault was further off than the land line. An express train was provided, and they dashed down to Howth. Again they telegraphed to Holyhead from the shore—no answer! They took a boat and rowed to the ship. A message sent to Holyhead brought back the reply that all was right there. It was now manifest that the fault lay somewhere between the 'Britannia' and the shore. It was necessary again to take up this portion of the line and test it little by little. The defect was probably caused by the straining of the ship upon a line comparatively short. When discovered, it was soon remedied on board. It was again recoiled into an open boat, the crew of which made a renewed attempt to lay it down to the shore. In the meantime Messrs. Statham and Newall proceeded to shore in another boat with the instruments; but when they overtook the boat which had been engaged in paying out the cable, they found it at a stand, the crew having managed to sink the whole line while still some distance from the shore. Again Mr. Statham had to return to the ship, get another mile of cable uncoiled, recoil it in the boat, and then row to where the deficient extremity

of the cable remained; and there, in an open boat, at two o'clock in the morning, with the aid of a little burning spirits, to solder the wires, reunite the gutta percha, and restore the cable to a continuous and insulated whole. This was effected, the remaining distance to the shore laid down, and that night of toil was at length repaid by a success the most ample and complete. On Thursday the 'Britannia' let go the cable and steamed away; while those on shore, after repeated experiments, were satisfactorily convinced that the communication with Holyhead was now at length without impediment."

OUR NATIVE SONGSTERS.

THOSE who are used to ramble among the lands made green and luxuriant by the silver streams which meander among them, must have remarked those merry graceful birds, the Wagtails. Now we see them peering down among the leaves of the water-flowers, or wading into the stream itself, and seizing the slugs and shell-fish which lie hidden there, or the beautiful winged creatures resting for a moment upon them; or devouring the larvæ of some, which, if left untouched, would soon be rising on wings of azure and gold. These birds are most delicately formed, with slender bodies and equally slender feet, their small heads terminated by exquisitely-moulded bills, and their long well-balanced tails moving up and down perpetually. The merry wagtails, or dishwashers, as country people call them, may be easily distinguished from any other birds, for none of our wood or stream-side minstrels at all resemble them in form, or in the black and white plumage which is so conspicuous even at a distance in the commoner species.



PIED WAGTAIL.

The Pied Wagtail* (*Motacilla Yarrellii*) might, for some of its habits, be almost classed with the waders, for it will remain in the shallow water

* The Pied Wagtail is seven inches and a half in length. The ground colour is black; but the forehead, the sides of the head and of the neck, the edges of the wing-coverts, and of the tertials, the outer tail-feathers, and the belly, are white. These are the hues of spring; but in winter the back becomes grey, and the chin and throat are white: the beak and feet are black.

for ten minutes at a time, walking along in pursuit of spiders and other insects. Sometimes it may be seen thus employed at the edge of the rivulet, or running along over the lawn of the garden, or on the meadow land; or making a short and sudden flight, with its tail outspread like a broad oar, and sailing about in the air with most graceful evolutions. It is no wonder that the birds have the popular name of wagtail, for this tail of theirs seems in incessant motion, vibrating not only in its flat and oar-like state during flight, but also quivering perpetually when raised in a perpendicular direction, as the lively creature runs along the ground. The French call these birds *les lavandières*, for they are often the constant companions of the washerwomen, who in France assemble by the sides of rivers to perform their occupations, and whose operation of beating the linen the wagtails seem to imitate by the movements of their tails. The birds seem, indeed, at all times perfect types of symmetry and glee, running with delight into the water, waging perpetual war with the insect race, and, during the period when their young demand food, requiring no small number to provide for their eager voracity. Nor do the parent birds themselves find a few sufficient for their supply, for they devour them with insatiable earnestness; and as they jerk about in the air after the gnats, or run pecking over the ground, their lively shrill notes of "guit, guit, guit, guit," have a sound which accords well with their active motions.

The pied wagtail seems fond of the companionship of man, often keeping near the labourer in the fields, and seeming far less fearful of him than of the bird of prey. It will run by the cattle, and look well into the broad furrows which the passing ploughshare leaves in the field, making successive leaps as it follows this; rising in the air considerably at the beginning of each effort, and sinking again at the close; swallowing a number of insects, which the ploughman turns up in his course, taking them more frequently from the ground than during flight. Mr. Yarrell quotes a letter from Mr. Rayner, in which the writer remarks, that in the summer and autumn of 1837, he had several wagtails of the pied and yellow species in his aviary, which were all very expert in catching and feeding on the minnows which were in a fountain in the centre. They hovered over the water, and seized the minnow with great dexterity as it approached the surface. He adds, that he was also much surprised at the wariness and cunning of some blackbirds and thrushes, which watched the wagtails during this process, and no sooner saw them take the prey, than they wickedly seized and secured it for their own dinners.

The pied wagtail appears to be a permanent resident in the southern parts of England, but is migratory in the northern counties, and in Scotland, leaving at the approach of winter, and returning about February or March. In autumn some of the pasture-lands, which are watered by streams, are rendered quite lively by the graceful and incessant motions of small flocks of these birds, which congregate there previously to taking their departure. As evening comes on, they retire into the bushes or copsewood near, making an incessant clamour, till darkness has overtaken all nature. As they wing their way onwards, with their jerking flight, made at no great height in the air, their noisy clamour would suggest the idea that the whole party was engaged in quarrelling with each other, no two holding the same opinions. The pied wagtail was, until recently, believed to be the same as the continental species, and both kinds were included by ornithologists, under the name of *Motacilla alba*. Mr. Gould ascertained that they were quite distinct from each other, and that our English wagtail is

much more robust than the white or pied wagtail of France, and of Europe generally. During winter, the colours of the two species are so similar as to account for their having so long been thought one; and their manners and habits are exactly alike. In summer, however, the pied wagtail of England has the whole of the head, back, and chest of a full deep jet black; while in the continental kind, at this period, the throat and head alone are of this colour, and the rest of the upper surface is of a light ash grey. This writer considers, that the Motacilla alba, though so common in the neighbourhood of Calais, has not yet been discovered on the opposite shores of Kent; he therefore named our English bird after the excellent naturalist, Mr. Yarrell. There are some good observers of birds, however, who think that the continental species is occasionally seen in our island.

The pied wagtail has, besides its call-note, a sweet and varied song, though not a loud one. In autumn it is like a low sweet murmur. "Encore," says the old French naturalist Belon, "ils savent rossignoller du gosier mélodieusement, chose qu'on peut souvent fois ouïr sur le commencement de l'hiver." It builds its nest generally somewhere near the stream, sometimes placing it in holes, or on a bank near to the edge of the water; but more frequently among piles of wood, or in heaps of stones, or perhaps in some old pollard willow which grows near the river, and whose ancient trunk remains when the greener boughs have long since disappeared. This wagtail is not a neat builder, and its dwelling is constructed somewhat carelessly, of small roots, and moss, and fibres of grasses mixed with wool, and lined with hair. The eggs are five in number, of a greyish-white colour speckled with brown. There are usually two broods in the year, and the parent birds are most courageous in the defence of their young, flying round and round the person who takes the nest, as if determined not to forsake it, and all the time uttering a wild scream of agony. Few birds either are more careful in keeping the nest clean, and removing from it continually anything which might render it unfit for the delicate little nestlings whose home it is.

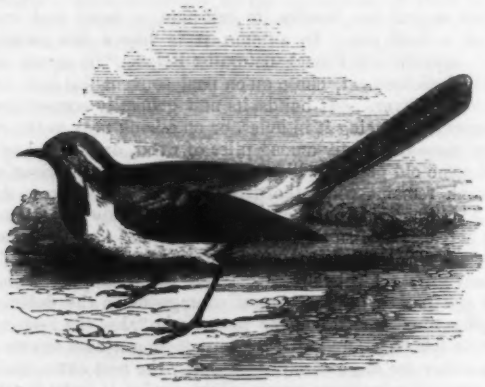
The wagtail will not long endure captivity, but its song, though sweet in a wild state, offers little temptation to the bird-trainer. In Egypt the flesh of these birds is eaten, and they are dried in the sand for this purpose.

That intrusive bird, the cuckoo, seems greatly to prefer the wagtail's nest to that of any other, when she intends finding a place for her eggs. The cuckoo has been often observed narrowly watching a pair of wagtails, during the process of nest-building, and indeed the busy birds can rarely escape the prying eyes of the less industrious one. Mr. Hoy, of Stoke Nayland, remarks: "On one occasion I had observed a cuckoo, during several days, anxiously watching a pair of wagtails building. I saw the cuckoo fly from the nest two or three times before it was half completed; and at last, the labour of the wagtails not going on, I imagine, so rapidly as might be wished, the cuckoo, deposited its egg before the lining of the nest was finished. The egg, contrary to my expectation, was not thrown out, and on the following day the wagtail commenced laying, and, as usual, the intruder was hatched at the same time as the rest, and soon had the whole nest to itself."

On another occasion, a cuckoo was observed to deposit its egg in the nest of the pied wagtail. In process of time, the young foundling was seen at the top of the thatch of the building where the nest was, and where its foster parents carefully fed it. The swallows, however, are not so for-

bearing with intruders, but seemed in this case highly indignant, and determined to frighten the innocent cause of their displeasure. They came down upon it, swooping to and fro in their anger, but the little cuckoo made neither defence nor appeal, but simply threw back its head, and opened its mouth, though, as he who observed it adds, "whether in fear, or to intimidate them, I cannot say."

The Grey Wagtail* (*Motacilla boarula*) is even a more elegant and graceful bird than the pied species. Like that, however, it loves the stream-sides, though it seems to prefer hilly districts to plains. It seeks its food on the borders of brooks and rivers, and comes, too, to the stagnant ditch where the constant decomposition of vegetable substances engenders a great profusion of insects. Its song is very superior to that of



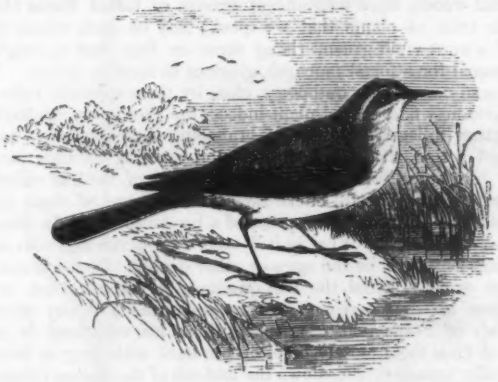
Grey Wagtail.

the pied wagtail; while its shrill call-note often attracts the attention of those who would not else observe it. This consists of the words "chiz, chiz, chizzle, chizzet," so that, as an accurate observer has said, it seems very fond of the letter z. The same writer, in a contribution to the Magazine of Natural History, remarks: "I have been amused with a singular habit which I have noticed in several individuals of the grey wagtails. They were fond of looking at their own images in the windows, and attacking them, uttering their peculiar cry, pecking and fluttering against the glass, as earnestly as if the object they saw had been a real rival instead of an imaginary one; or perhaps they were only admiring themselves, and testifying their satisfaction in this way. It is remarkable, that two of these instances were in the autumn, when the same motives for either love or animosity which would be likely to actuate them in the

* The Grey Wagtail is seven inches and three quarters in length. Upper parts slate-grey; wing and tail feathers black with yellowish edges; the outmost feathers of the tail almost wholly white; chin and throat black, descending in a point on the breast; a streak above each eye, and one on the side of the neck, pale buff; whole under parts and the upper tail-coverts brilliant yellow. In winter the black disappears from the chin and throat, which with the breast and belly become yellowish-white; the beak and feet are dusky brown.

spring, would no longer exist. The first of these instances occurred when I was a boy, and was repeated daily, and almost hourly, both against the windows of my father's house and those of that of our neighbour; who being rather superstitious, was alarmed about it, and came to consult my mother on the subject. She said there was a bird, which her brother had told her was a barley bird, which was continually flying against the windows; and as birds were not in the habit of doing so at any other time, she thought some serious calamity was portended by it. My mother comforted her as well as she could; and I undertook to rid her of the annoyance. By setting a horse-hair noose on one of the window ledges, which it was in the habit of frequenting, I soon caught it; and by plucking out the under tail-coverts, which I wanted to dress yellow duns with, I effectually cured it of the propensity."

This bird is, during the summer, very generally diffused throughout Europe. In Scotland and the northern counties of England it is a regular summer visitor, coming to us in April, and quitting at about the end of September. It is described by Selby, however, as having been seen in the south of England in the winter only during its southern migration. It has two broods each season. The nest is usually placed in some rocky ledge near the clear pebbly stream, or among some heap of stones, or perchance in a hole which the bird finds in a neighbouring bank, where the gentle murmuring of waters may serve as an accompaniment to its pleasing song. The eggs are of a yellowish-grey tint, with dashes of a darker colour.



YELLOW WAGTAIL.

The Yellow Wagtail* (*Motacilla flava*) frequents downs and open arable lands, and is very similar in its habits to the grey species. It builds on the ground, and its eggs are of a pale brown, marked with a darker hue. It is a migratory bird, arriving here in March; and its song is very sweet.

Besides the various songs of the birds already named as frequenters of

* The Yellow Wagtail is six inches and a half in length. Upper parts pale olive; wing and tail brownef; whole under parts, as well as a streak over the eye, brilliant yellow; beak and feet black.

well-watered lands, the call-notes and chirpings of several others may be heard in such scenes; and the low sweet notes of the Bearded Titmouse (*Calamophilus biarmicus*) in some few places come sounding from the reeds, "like a little silver bell," which sends its clear ringing tones far away over the grassy meadow; and the merry hurried song of the March Titmouse (*Parus palustris*) falls there upon the ear. Here, too, the black-headed Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schœniclus*) comes in company with many of its fellows to seek its food and rear its young among the reeds and long grasses of the stream, and sings its song as if in too great a hurry to enunciate it fully. It is often said to be one of our few night singers, but we cannot claim for it this distinction; and it is probable that the notes of the sedge warbler, heard during night from the reeds, have been mistaken for those of the bunting. But it is no great singer at the best of times, and only deserves a slight mention in our enumeration of singing birds.

THE FERN TRIBE.

In traversing the country during the months of summer and autumn, the eye of the traveller is irresistibly attracted by the extreme beauty of a class of plants which adorn the hedges, banks and rocks, fringing the sides of the rivulet with their graceful drooping foliage, or clothing stone walls, bridges, rocks, and ruins with a living verdure of rare beauty. Along the broad margin of the mountain stream, or in the fair green glades of the umbrageous woods, these magnificent groups of tufted Ferns (for it is of that noble tribe of plants that we speak) may be seen, whose finely-cut leaves, of a most vivid green, rising three or four feet in height, might form a coronal for a forest monarch, glorious in form as in hue. Perhaps, if the ground happens to be boggy, close by these splendid tufts of Fern the wanderer may find a regal plant indeed, the *Osmunda regalis*, throwing up its feathery foliage in clusters of branching leaves, from six to ten feet high, which spring straight from the root, dividing as they ascend into what look like branches, but are in fact divisions of the leaf called *pinnæ*, which droop with a graceful curve earthward. Some of these pinnæ are terminated by a sort of fingered point of a brownish hue, of a singular and beautiful appearance. "What is it?" asks the uninformed who sees it for the first time; "can it be the eggs or other deposit of some insect? can it be blossom or seed?" and the like questions he will ask when he gathers two or three leaves (or *fronds* as they are termed) of any other of the varied kinds of Ferns that he meets with in his woodland or mountain ramble, and finds them closely beset on the back with grey or brown spots symmetrically arranged, some down the mid-rib of the leaves, others around the margin of each leaflet, whilst again on others a mass of this brown substance extends over the whole surface of the leaf.

Let us see whether a few very simple rules may not aid those who have been delighted with the beauty of the Ferns which adorn their pathway, and as yet wholly ignorant of the structure of this interesting tribe of plants to be able to discriminate a little between their various species, and to view them with other interest than that with which the mere superficial observer looks at them.

"How may we know a Fern from any other plant?" is a question more frequently asked than well answered. I have heard a learned man who had widely-extended information on many subjects reply to it, "Why, they are

those very large leaves which grow in the hedges." Now it is true that there are some large leaves which grow in the hedges which are Ferns. The great Shield Fern (*Lastrea Filix mas*), the Brachen (*Pteris aquilina*), and some others, may be instanced; but there are also many large leaves which are not Ferns to be found, and moreover there are very many Ferns which neither grow in hedges or have "large leaves," for some are so diminutive that their venation and fructification can only be determined by the aid of a microscope, the whole plant often not being an inch long; and those of this description usually are found not in hedges, but on walls and rocks, some growing out of the driest mortar in the chinks of old walls, and others beneath the dash of the waterfall, on crags and inaccessible rocks and cliffs.

Loudon gives two distinctions which prevail between Fern and plants of other orders. The first is "found in the situation of what is called their *sori*, or patches of reproductive organs, which are in all cases inverted on the back surface of the leaf or frond, sometimes appearing only in the form of little spots, sometimes covering the whole of the under side of the frond, and sometimes contracting the substance of the frond so as to give it the appearance of a single mass of fructification." The other distinction is, that "the fronds are always rolled up in a circular manner when they are first developed."

ADDER'S TONGUE.

MOONWORT.

Most people will have noticed this singular appearance of the young leaves of Ferns in the spring, especially that of the great Shield Fern whose brown hairy stem when thus beginning to appear looks like a large brown

caterpillar rolled up, and, as it develops, assumes the form of a crosier, or shepherd's crook.

The whole tribe of Ferns (Natural order, Filices) is divided into two parts. The first includes those whose thecæ, or little masses of seed vessels, are provided with an annular ring, by the operation of which the cups containing the seeds are torn asunder and the seeds dispersed: these are called *Annulatæ*. The second includes those which have no such provision, and these are called *Exannulatæ*. The "flowering Fern" (*Osmunda regalis*), the "Moonwort" (*Botrychium lunaria*), and the "Adder's Tongue" (*Ophioglossum vulgare*), belong to this latter class, whilst all other species of British Ferns are to be included in the former. This class, the Annulatæ, is subdivided into two sections; in the one the thecæ are attached in masses to the back of the frond; in the other they are attached in a receptacle situated on the margin of the frond. Each of these two sections contains within itself several families, determined by different circumstances connected with the placing, form, and other variations of the thecæ and their coverings.

Now let us see what are the different parts of a Fern. Each has, 1st, a root; 2ndly, a part which connects that root with the fronds, and out of which they spring, which is called the Rhizoma, and is that which in the tree fern forms the trunk; and 3rdly, the fronds, or leaves. The Rhizoma, when it creeps underground, is called *creeping;* when it rises above it, *tufted*. The frond consists of a stem extending from the Rhizoma quite to the apex of the frond called the *Rachis*. On either side of the main stem, the leaflets, or other arrangements of the foliage, are disposed. In some Ferns the frond is pinnatifid, that is, the little leaflets, or pinnæ, are not quite divided from each other. The "Northern Hand Fern" (*Lomaria spicant*) is one of this formation. Others, as the "Rue-leaved Spleenwort" (*Asplenium Ruta Mararia*), are *pinnate*, that is, having the leaflets quite separate. The Brachen is *pinnulate*, that is, divided into branches, and the pinnulæ in this and some others are again divided into *lobes*. The Hart's Tongue (*Scolopendrium vulgare*) is again quite different in form, the frond being straight and undivided, as it is called *linear*. Indeed, so variously are the leaflets of the different species of Fern cut and arranged, that it would take too much space to enumerate them.

But though many species of Fern may be discriminated at first sight by the form of the leaf, the growth, &c., it is by the venation, and the arrangement of the fructification, that their families and species can alone be determined. The seeds of Ferns are not preceded by any visible flower. They are generally produced in the back of the frond in capsules, called thecæ, which are clustered together in little masses situated on the veins at the division of the fronds, or on their margin, and frequently under a white membraneous substance which looks like the cuticle of a frond, and is called the *Indusium*, though this is sometimes wholly deficient.

This arrangement of the fructification on the back of the frond seems universal in all the families of the annulatæ, among British Ferns, with one exception, that of the *Hymenophyllaceæ*, in which the thecæ are attached in a receptacle situated on the margin of the frond; but as there are but three species belonging to this family, and these of rather rare occurrence, we need not here enter into any minutiæ concerning them.

A few words on the fructification of the other division of the Fern tribe, the Exannulatæ, and our review of general characteristics will be ended.

The reader will remember that the distinction between the Annulatæ,

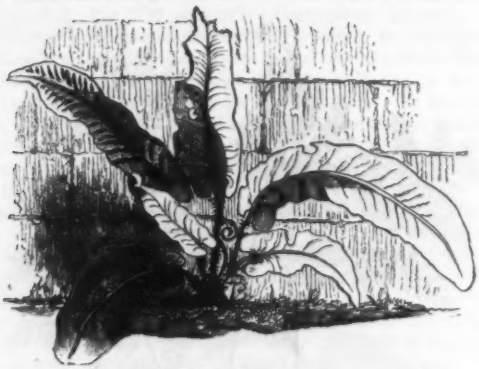
and the exannulatæ, is, that the former are provided with an elastic marginal ring, to assist in dispersing the seeds from the thecæ which those rings enclose, and the latter are devoid of that appendage. Plants of this latter division have their thecæ in a spike, either branched or clubbed, and attached, in some species, to a separate frond, in others terminating the leafy frond. Of such arrangement as the last named is that noble plant, whose spikes of fruit we have spoken of as surprising our wanderers in the early part of this paper; it is the *Osmunda regalis*, commonly called the

THE FLOWERING FERN

"Flowering Fern." "The apex of the frond of the Osmunda," says Newman, "is composed of a complete cluster of spikes; these spikes correspond to *pinnulæ*, of which only the mid-vein and a slight marginal ring is present, and to each of the lateral veins is attached a nearly-spherical mass of thecæ: these spherical masses entirely supersede any leafy portion in pinnæ so converted. Frequent instances, however, exhibit the base of a pinnula in a leafy or barren, whilst the apex is in a fertile state." It is, however, not every leaf that thus terminates; some are barren fronds, and they preserve their leafy appearance quite to the summit of the leaf. Of the first division are the Moonwort and the Adder's Tongue; in the former a little branched spike of fruit is joined to a pinnate frond, these two members forming the whole plant, which is not in general more than from four to six inches in height. The latter consists of a straight spike of fruit issuing from the interior surface of the frond at its base, usually longer than

the leafy part, and bearing the thecæ in a double longitudinal row. "When the seed is ripe, these thecæ open transversely, gape widely, and suffer the seed to be scattered by the winds."

The fructification of all the Ferns of the division Annulatæ is composed of the same parts, and arranged on the same principle, yet in some of the details each family, and indeed each species, differs from the rest. We will take a specimen of Hart's Tongue (*Scolopendrium vulgare*) as an example,



THE HART'S TONGUE.

and examine its different parts. After the leaf has grown a little time, you will find a number of pale narrow bands appearing at pretty equal distances on some of the veins, and following their direction. After a time the skin of the leaf where these bands are separates from the green part below, and soon after something raises up the skin, and at last bursts through it, dividing the skin into two parts, one edge of which remains attached to the leaf: the cause of this is a multitude of brown seed-like grains closely crowded together, and forming a ridge. This skin is called the "*Indusium*," the ridge, "*Sorus*," the grains, "*Thecæ*;" and the only means of propagating itself which the plant possesses lie in these thecæ. The theca is not itself a seed; it is a hollow body containing a quantity of minute oval grains called *spores*, which are analogous to seeds, and in which the reproductive power is invested. The power which Ferns possess of multiplying themselves is almost incredible. The Hart's Tongue, which is by no means a large plant, or possessed of a peculiarly high power of reproductiveness, bears on each leaf (according to Lindley) about 80 sori. Each of these consists of from 3,000 to 6,000 thecæ, each theca containing about 50 spores; so that by a moderate calculation a single leaf of the plant may produce not less than 18,000,000 of young plants.

I have endeavoured to make this slight sketch of the general and leading characteristics of the Fern tribe as simple as perspicuity would allow; still I am conscious that, to many who have no previous knowledge on this very attractive subject, much that even this short statement contains may seem difficult to understand (though I hope these difficulties may disappear after a few minutes' careful consideration and examination); whilst at the same time I am aware that to those who have made this interesting branch of

the vegetable creation their study, it will be evident that I have given but a barely-rudimentary account of the structure of the tribe, and left out much which, but for the fear of confusing my subject, I should have said. I hope, however, that these few elementary hints may suffice to enable any one who reads them with attention to know a Fern when they see it—a degree of knowledge to which, as I have before said, many who are capable of feeling sincere interest in the works of God, as displayed in the inanimate creations, have not yet attained.

In the northern parts of the world, Ferns are green leafy productions, which die down to the ground every year, some yielding sooner than others to the influence of the seasons, but all being renewed from the base of the plant annually. In tropical countries, however, this is not the case; they acquire real trunks, resembling palms, and often rise to the height of from 40 to 50 feet or more, without a leaf. Then they throw out masses of the most graceful foliage, which wave like feathers on the air, their leaflets being of the most exquisite form and regularity of arrangement. Many of these tree Ferns are of great interest, both on account of their beauty and also of peculiarities in their structure. One of them, Aspidium Baromez, has formed the groundwork for many fables, and ignorant people have been induced to believe that, in the deserts of Scythia, creatures, half animal, half plant, have been produced. This deception has been contrived by cutting off all but a small portion of the stem of a woolly stalked species, and turning it upside down, when it presents much the appearance of a small animal. It has been called "The Scythian Lamb;" and Loudon tells us that the belief in its animal nature has been increased by the circumstance that the colour of the juice of this plant is of a rich blood colour, which soon becomes thick by exposure to the air.

In the carboniferous strata of England and elsewhere, are found fossil Ferns of arborescent kinds, such as do not now exist, and of immense magnitude, some of them appearing to have reached the height of more than 80 feet. The fructification of these extinct species, as well as of the arborescent Ferns now existing, is arranged on the same principle as that of our smaller species.

At a future opportunity we hope to offer to our readers a few remarks on the appearance, situation, &c., of some of the different individuals of this tribe which are to be found in Great Britain, and also to give a few hints on the construction of wood cases for the purpose of window cultivation, and of the management of a Fernery; but for the present we must desist, as our space forbids our extending the limits of this paper.

CHRISTMAS IN THE NORTH OF GERMANY.

There is a Christmas custom here which pleased and interested me. The children make little presents to their parents and to each other, and the parents to the children. For three or four months before Christmas the girls are all busy, and the boys save up their pocket-money, to make or purchase these presents: what the present is to be is cautiously kept secret, and the girls have a world of contrivances to conceal it,—such as working where they are out on visits, and the others are not with them; getting up in the morning before daylight, and the like. Then, on the evening before Christmas-day, one of the parlours is lighted up by the children, into which the parents must not go. A great yew-bough is fastened on

the table at a little distance from the wall; a multitude of little tapers are fastened in the bough, but so as not to catch it till they are nearly burnt out, and coloured paper hangs and flutters from the twigs. Under this bough the children lay out in great order the presents they mean for their parents, still concealing in their pockets what they intend for each other. Then the parents are introduced, and each presents his little gift; and then bring out the rest one by one from their pockets, and present them with kisses and embraces. Where I witnessed this scene there were eight or

nine children, and the eldest daughter and mother wept aloud for joy and tenderness; and the tears ran down the face of the father, and he clasped all his children so tight to his breast, it seemed as if he did it to stifle the sob that was rising within him. I was very much affected. The shadow of the bough and its appendages on the wall, and arching over on the ceiling, made a pretty picture; and then the raptures of the very little ones, when at last the twigs and their needles began to take fire and snap! Oh it was delight for them! On the next day, in the great parlour, the parents lay out on the table the presents for the children. A scene of more sober joy succeeds, as on this day, after an old custom, the mother says privately to each of her daughters, and the father to his sons, that which he has observed most praiseworthy, and that which was most faulty in their conduct. Formerly, and still in all the smaller towns and villages throughout North

Germany, these presents were sent by all the parents to some one fellow, who, in high buskins, a white robe, a mask, and an enormous flax wig, personates Knecht Rupert, the servant Rupert. On Christmas-night, he goes round to every house and says that Jesus Christ his master sent him thither; the parents and elder children receive him with great pomp of reverence, while the little ones are most terribly frightened. He then inquires for the children, and according to the character which he hears from the parents, he gives them the intended present as if they come out of heaven from Jesus Christ. Or, if they should have been bad children, he gives the parents a rod, and in the name of his master recommends them to use it frequently. About seven or eight years old the children are let into the secret, and it is curious to observe how faithfully they keep it.—COLERIDGE.

HYMN ON THE NATIVITY.

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious form, that light insufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty—
Wherewith he wont at heav'n's high council table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity—
He laid aside! and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, heav'nly Muse! shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome him to this his new abode,
Now while the heav'n, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
Oh! run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel choir,
From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.—MILTON.

CHRISTMAS.

So now is come our joyful'st feast;
Let every man be jolly,
Each room with ivy leaves is drest,
And every post with holly.
Though some churls at our mirth repine,
Round your foreheads garlands twine,
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry.

Now our neighbours' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning;
Their ovens they with baked meat choke,
And all their spits are turning.
Without the door let sorrow lie,
And if for cold it hap to die,
We'll bury 't in a Christmas pie,
And ever more be merry.

Now every lad is wondrous trim,
And no man minds his labour;
Our lasses have provided them
A bagpipe and a tabour.
Young men and maids, and girls and boys,
Give life to one another's joys,
And you anon shall by the noise,
Perceive that they are merry.

The poor men to the justices
With capons make their errants,
And if they hap to fail of these,
They plague them with their warrants:
But now they feed them with good cheer,
And what they want they take in beer,
For Christmas comes but once a year,
And then they shall be merry.

The client now his suit forbears,
  The prisoner's heart is eased;
The debtor drinks away his cares,
  And for the time is pleased.
Though other's purses be more fat,
Why should we pine or grieve at that?
Hang sorrow! care will kill a cat,
  And therefore let's be merry.

Hark! now the wags abroad do call
  Each other forth to rambling;
Anon you'll see them in the hall,
  For nuts and apples scrambling.
Hark! how the roofs with laughter sound,
Anon they'll think the house goes round,
For they the cellar's depth have found,
  And there they will be merry.

The maidens with their wassail bowls
  About the streets are singing;
The boys are come to catch the owls,
  The wild mare in is bringing.
Our kitchen boy hath broke his box,
And to the dealing of the ox,
Our honest neighbours come by flocks,
  And here they will be merry.

Now kings and queens poor sheepcoats have,
  And mate with everybody;
The honest now may play the knave,
  And wise men play the noddy.
Some youths will now a mumming go,
Some others play at Rowland-bo,
And twenty other games boys mo,
  Because they will be merry.

Then, wherefore, in these merry days,
  Should we, I pray, be duller?
No, let us sing some roundelays,
  To make our mirth the fuller:
And while we thus inspired sing,
Let all the streets with echoes ring;
Woods and hills, and everything,
  Bear witness we are merry.

George Wither, the author of the preceding poem, descriptive of the mode in which Christmas was kept in the sixteenth century, flourished during the period of the civil wars. In the year 1613 he published a satire, which giving offence to the Government, caused his arrest and committal to prison. When the war broke out between the Parliament and Charles I., Wither took the popular side, and as one of Cromwell's major-generals was appointed to keep watch over the Royalists of Surrey; he profited largely by his position, but at the Restoration he was deprived of the possessions he had obtained, and was for his writings again thrown into prison, from which he was released four years before his death. The merry song from which we have given large extracts ill accords with the Puritan mode of thought and life. It may have been written previously to the period of his taking an active part in the civil wars; but even if not, it is an instance out of many others that the natural character will break through the bonds which party and fanaticism have thrown around it.

XUM

THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

THE following extract from a letter just received from a lady gives rather an uncomfortable picture of the state of society in the Golden Age:—

"*Geelong, Melbourne, May* —, 1852.

"The discovery of gold here has completely turned the brains of all the lower order of the community, and has rendered this country anything but desirable for a residence; scarcely a servant to be had, and the few there are asking enormous wages. Nearly all the working class are successful at the diggings, but we seldom hear of gentlemen doing any good. We have known of several working men who have realized upwards of 100*l.* in a week or two, and consequently there are no men satisfied with quiet employment, even at the highest rate of wages. We are amongst the class who feel all the inconvenience, and I may say misery, of the gold mania: we can scarcely get anything done for us, even at an enormous expense, and have then to bear with intolerable airs and impudence. In fact, the diggers term themselves 'the new aristocracy,' and say the ladies will soon have to wash and cook for them. Men are now getting from 40*l.* to 80*l.* a year wages, and women (who will scarcely do anything) from 25*l.* to 40*l.*; washing is 7*s.* a dozen in Melbourne, and as much as 5*s.* 6*d.* everywhere; and a woman charges 5*s.* 6*d.* for a day's work. Provisions are all dear; our population has already been doubled, from the people flocking from Adelaide, Van Diemen's Land, and Sydney; and we now expect multitudes of people from England, &c. There are now upwards of 40,000 located at the Mount Alexander diggings, about eighty miles from Melbourne, and the road is occupied by a constant stream of drays, &c., going and coming. The population of Brighton is about 1,600, and I think every working man of the number has been to the diggings, and nearly all been more or less successful. The smallest sums made in about a month have been 50*l.*—some have made 500*l.* I do not think any of the working men in Brighton will ever settle down quietly again: some drink to excess when they come home for a few days, and the love of gain grows upon all, male and female, most visibly. Those of whom we hoped better things seem carried away, and 'the root of all evil' evidently gains the ascendency in their hearts: those who were once quiet working people now think industry beneath them, and fancy themselves too delicate to work: continually, if we apply to women to wash, or clean the house, they now say their husbands forbid them to work, as they may injure their health! These are the wives of the successful gold diggers; therefore they mostly gossip, drink, and dress to excess, during their husbands' absence. Things are in a far worse state than they have ever been here as regard getting anything done; and out of five servants, we have now only one, and find it impossible to replace those that have left. It is with great difficulty we get our clothes washed: a servant, who married from our house, and is living at Brighton, and whose husband is successful at the diggings, condescends, as a great favour, to come for a day sometimes, for the highest rate of wages; and then we have to send some to be mangled, and some to be ironed, elsewhere, and perhaps the women who engage to do it will not do it, when we have had the trouble of sending the things, but coolly send word they are going to a party, &c., &c. All these miseries continually draw forth regret at the horrible gold discovery; but I must not give you the 'gold fever' by dwelling longer on this disagreeable subject."